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Das historisch-kritische Wörterbuch des Marxismus/
The Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism

Editorial Introduction

Historical Materialism has previously published information about the *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus (HKWM)* of the Berliner Institut für kritische Theorie (InkriT), edited by Wolfgang Fritz Haug and published by Argument Verlag.¹ Beginning as a German translation of the second edition of the French *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme* (1985) edited by Georges Labica and Gerard Bensussan, it has developed into an international project involving over eight hundred Marxist intellectuals from all continents. The status of a translation has been definitively surpassed: while the French work was contained in one (significant) volume, upon completion the *HKWM* will comprise fifteen volumes (six have already been published; Volume 6/II: *Imperium bis Justiz* is scheduled to appear at the end of 2004). Correspondingly, the range of concepts treated has been significantly expanded to over

¹ See

1,500. These include not only 'classical' Marxist concepts such as 'Materialism', 'Mode of Production', 'Ideology', 'Base and Superstructure', 'Surplus-Value' and 'Revolution'. Also treated are Marxist interventions into the Western philosophical vocabulary ('Transcendence/Immanence', 'Metaphysics', 'Concept'), aesthetic and cultural categories ('Literary Criticism', 'Interpretation', 'Epic Theatre', 'Comedy', 'Kitsch', 'Irony'), socialist-feminist concepts ('Gender Relations', 'Domestic Labour', 'Free Love'), significant traditions within Marxism ('Leninism', 'Trotskyism', though not individuals, unless they have given rise to a practical or theoretical tendency, such as the 'Della Volpean School'), and a further array of concepts which, though originating outside of Marxism, have become important for left-wing politics and movements ('Meritocracy', 'Gene Technology'). Much more than a dictionary of definitions, the range of concepts, the rigour of scholarship and the sense conveyed of a living and evolving *Weltanschauung* recalls the encyclopaedic projects of the Enlightenment, an essential reference work for all concerned to further the contemporary revival of Marxism as a scholarly research programme and political praxis.

In this issue, *Historical Materialism* begins a collaboration with the *HKWM* which will see the publication of one translated article in each issue. The final pages of the journal will thus constitute a growing archive of central concepts of the Marxist traditions, allowing readers of the journal to benefit from the first regular presentation of the *HKWM* to the anglophone Marxist community. *Historical Materialism* further hopes, in collaboration with our publishers, Brill Academic Press, to assist in the translation of the entire *HKWM* project into English, initially in an electronic form available on the Internet with regular updates of new English translations of articles, and culminating in the paper publication of the full dictionary upon completion of the German edition. Further information regarding subscriptions to support this ambitious undertaking will be published in *Historical Materialism* as it becomes available.

The translation into *English* of a *German* project, itself originally a translation from the *French*, is not, of course, an experience entirely foreign to Marxism. Just as Marx's intellectual development benefited not merely from multilingualism but also, crucially, the different *times* at which new conceptual registers were integrated into his overall project, so the commencement of the systematic translation into English signals another decisive stage in the progressive internationalisation and strengthening of the *HKWM* project. It played an important role in bringing together Marxists from different traditions

in the immediate post-unification period of the early 1990s, when wholesale abandonment of Marxism was the order of the day in both East and West Germany. Confronted by ideological and institutional hindrances at home, a first phase of international expansion witnessed the entry of contributors from outside the German-speaking world, whose articles were translated by the *HKWM* editorial board; publication remained solely in German. A second phase of on-going translation into English contemporaneous with the continued production of the German edition will offer two related benefits:

(i) First, and most obviously, the availability to Anglophone Marxists (and by extension, given English's status as the *lingua franca* of our times, to a broader section of the international Marxist community) of an indispensable reference work for Marxist theoretical research which far surpasses other existing dictionaries in English in terms of philological accuracy, scholarly depth, length of individual entries and range of concepts treated. This is in accord with *Historical Materialism's* intention to play a leading role in encouraging the formation of international networks of Marxist theoretical exchange and debate. The collaboration between the journal and the *HKWM* project thus forms a central element of the translation programme which is being actively pursued both in the pages of the journal and the *Historical Materialism* book series published by Brill.

(ii) Second, and equally importantly, it provides the opportunity for those without first-hand knowledge of the German edition to gain a clearer idea of the form and procedures of an *HKWM* entry and to consider the possibility of active participation in the project. For the *HKWM* is not merely a reference work. With regular meetings of the editorial board at the Institut für Philosophie of the Freie Universität of Berlin, a 'virtual workshop' via email for discussion of articles and proposals, and a yearly international InkriT conference in Germany (conducted in both German and English), it is also an evolving project which lives from the integration of new voices into an on-going dialogue of Marxist theoretical renewal. It is hoped that regular publication of articles in English translation will lead to an increased participation of Anglophone Marxists not simply as *readers* of the *HKWM*, but also as *contributors*.

The article 'Dialectics' by Wolfgang Fritz Haug published below can be regarded as an example of the historical critical, philological and dialogical form to which all *HKWM* entries aspire. As will be seen, entries in the *HKWM*

are organised according to principles distinct from those both of existing Marxist dictionaries in English and of comparable works of contemporary bourgeois scholarship, and which therefore call for some brief, introductory explanation.

On the one hand, an *HKWM* entry places a much stronger emphasis upon philology than is the case, for instance, in the important *Dictionary of Marxist Thought* edited by Tom Bottomore, the most significant comparable work in English. In the *HKWM*, quotations from and references to the pre-Marxist history of a concept, its role in the works of Marx and Engels, and subsequent elaboration within the various traditions of Marxism are all carefully recorded, in order to assist further independent work. Comprehensiveness is aimed at in the non-partisan treatment of conflicting tendencies and lines of development of a concept in the various Marxist traditions, but more important is that entries convey a sense of the unfinished history of these concepts, their contemporary vitality and relevance to ongoing debates both within and outside Marxism. In short, as in the present article, the emphasis is less upon a definition of a concept than presentation and critical assessment of its historical determinateness, development, efficacy and prospects for future deployment.

On the other hand, there is a significant political and philosophical difference between the organisation of an *HKWM* entry and one from, for instance, such a monumental twelve-volume work as the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Edited by Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer and Gottfried Gabriel, begun in 1971 and expected to be completed by the end of 2004, the internationally acclaimed *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* is, as Haug wrote in his Foreword to Volume 1 (1994) of the *HKWM*, 'a virtually unattainable example in respect of its erudition'. The difference between the two works, however, does not consist in scholarly or philological standards. Rather, the historical-critical framing problematic which introduces an entry in the *HKWM* indicates an awareness drawn from the Marxist tradition that an attempt to comprehend history is simultaneously an intervention into it, the adoption of a position in the present and a proposal for the future. An *HKWM* entry, therefore, before embarking upon a 'rescuing critique [*rettende Kritik*]' of the 'tradition of the oppressed' (Benjamin), attempts to outline clearly and succinctly the contemporary relevance, potential and necessary 'incompletion' of a concept. Rather than being a failing, the acknowledgement of such incompleteness turns out to be precisely the strength of the distinctive *HKWM* historical-critical

method, for, at the same time as it gathers together for critical study the strengths and weakness, successes and failures, of the past, it invites us to enter into the heart of the unfinished and always contested theoretical and practical dialogue which will be Marxism's future.

For further information about the project and guidelines for authors, please contact Thomas Weber at <hkwmred@zedat.fu-berlin.de> or go to <www.hkwm.de>.

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